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HQ USPACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA FOR DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
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SUBJECT: Polls Indicate Support for U.S.-Japan Alliance
At All-Time High

¶1. (U) The results of the annual Yomiuri Shimbun-Gallup Poll released on December 2, 2006 indicated that support for the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is at an all-time high among Japanese, with 66 percent of respondents indicating that the security treaty is useful to Japan, up 4 percent from a year ago. Some commentators have attributed the strong support for the treaty to rising anxiety in Japan caused by the North Korean missile and nuclear bomb tests this year and to the strong personal ties between President Bush and former Prime Minister Koizumi. However, polls sponsored by the State Department Office of Research (INR/R/AA) and Embassy Tokyo indicate that the upward trend in support for the alliance began before North Korea's missile and nuclear bomb tests of the last six months and that the strength of support for the alliance does not rely on strong personal ties between leaders.

¶2. (SBU) The Yomiuri-Gallup Poll (a telephone survey conducted in both Japan and the United States) is a much-watched snapshot of attitudes in both Japan and the U.S. that was conducted this year in mid-November. Results regarding support for the security treaty were published in the Yomiuri Shimbun on December 2, 2006. They confirm an upward trend in public support for the treaty that was apparent before the provocative North Korean missile tests in July and nuclear bomb test in October, although reaction to these events is doubtless a factor in the rise. Polling conducted by the State Department's Office of Research (INR/R/AA) in conjunction with Embassy Tokyo in late May and early June 2006 indicated that eight-in-ten Japanese favored maintaining the security alliance with the U.S. Meanwhile, large majorities thought it was important for the U.S. to maintain its military presence in East Asia (73 percent vs. 21 percent) and bases in Japan (67 percent vs. 27 percent) in order to maintain regional peace and stability. Seven-in-ten (72 percent vs. 23 percent) said U.S. forces in Japan are important for Japan's defense. Smaller majorities (ranging from 51 percent to 57 percent) said the same in 1995-96, when this question was last asked.

¶3. (U) In a similar vein, the Yomiuri-Gallup poll asked what should be done about the troop strength of U.S. forces in Japan and 46 percent said it should be maintained at its current level, up 8 points from last year's survey. This figure marked another all-time high.

Meanwhile, 35 percent said troop levels should be reduced, down 8 points from last year. The same question has been asked seven times in the past, but the proportion of opinions calling for the troop strength of US forces in Japan to be sustained at its current level topped that of opinions calling for reductions only in the survey conducted in 2001 following the terrorist attacks in the United States.

¶4. (SBU) Views on security issues occur against a broader backdrop of overall positive views of the U.S., so this upward trend in favorable views is good news for the whole relationship. The May-June sample taken by the Office of Research and the embassy also showed that three-fourths had a favorable opinion of the U.S., unchanged since the fall of 2005; 77 percent thought that relations were in good shape Q off slightly from a November 2005 peak (86 percent).

¶5. (SBU) The broad strength of the U.S.-Japan relationship also appeared in an embassy-sponsored Internet poll conducted in early June 2006. This survey found that 58 percent of respondents saw the personal relationship between President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi as important to bilateral ties, while seven-in-ten believed that Japan's alliance with the U.S. would remain "about the same as now," while only one-in-ten saw a new prime minister making the alliance stronger.

¶6. (U) Although recent polling is positive, last yearQs Yomiuri-Gallup poll indicated that there are weak points in public perceptions of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Since 2002, for example, the Yomiuri-Gallup poll has indicated that less than 50 percent of Japanese Qtrust the U.S. Yomiuri analysts interpret this to be tied to negative views of the war in Iraq, contention over the

realignment of U.S. bases in Japan, and the after effects of the U.S. rejection of the Kyoto treaty. Since the 2005 poll showed that 53 percent of Japanese do not trust the U.S., it will be interesting to see the 2006 poll result on this question when the rest of the Yomiuri-Gallup poll is published later this month.

SCHIEFFER